

If you think Urban Creep is that Weird Guy on the corner, you're mistaken. It's worse than that. Locations which were once Rural are now being classified as Urban under the Rural Health Care Support Program. The reclassification is reducing locations eligible for support. It's not that towns are becoming cities; instead, the government is lowering the threshold on what it concedes Urban.

The reclassification is driven by, of all things, the auto. To make financial ends meet, farm families often need income which requires extra employment off the farm. The Census uses the commute as the basis for creating an abnormally large community of interest. An example of this is Cornell, Wisconsin in Chippewa County. Cornell has a population of 1466 and a 45 mile drive to Eau Claire, Eau Claire Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Cornell is classified as an Urban Area; therefore the local clinic is not eligible for Support.

Rural to urban commuting should not be used as an indicator. City size and population density should be the only criteria used to determine where the transition from urban to rural occurs.

Rural Health Care Rural Urban determination began with the use of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) with some modifications but a new definition is needed.

Critical Access Hospitals – automatically qualify as a Supported Site

Urban Areas are defined as a city in a state with a population of 50,000 or more and the adjacent incorporated cities, all other Areas are eligible

This simple modification provides relief to Critical Access Hospitals and sets a simple standard to determine urban and rural areas. The definition is based on only population and no other factors. The modification streamlines the process and eliminates the Cornell's of the world.

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